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For more information please visit: International Scientific Cooperation

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Progress in the Development of an International Regime on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity is attempting to develop an international regime for access to genetic resources and sharing the benefits arising from their use. The intergovernmental Working Group established for this purpose met for the sixth time from January 21 to 25, 2008 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Working Group made considerable progress in producing a new, short and concise working document, consisting of sections on the main components and lists of items "to be further elaborated with the aim of incorporating them in the international regime," in cases where there was agreement in principle, or "for further consideration," in cases of disagreement or need for further clarification. There remain, however, deep differences among groups of countries concerning the nature and the scope of the international regime.

The Canadian delegation was led by Environment Canada and the Department of Foreign Affairs. AAFC was represented by Dr Brad Fraleigh, Director, Intergovernmental Relations (ISCB). Access to genetic resources is crucial to agricultural research, and it's important for the international regime to be consistent with existing Canadian practices. Canada proposed text, which was agreed to by the other countries, "welcoming the agreements and other work relating to ABS in various forums, and in particular the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the multi-year programme of work of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations", where Canada has been active under AAFC's leadership.

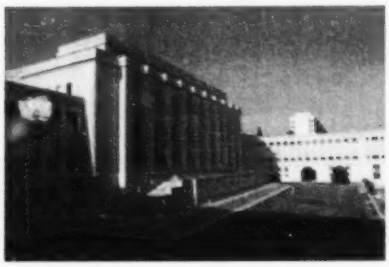
Information, documents and the report of the meeting can be found on the Convention on Biological Diversity website. Coverage by the Earth Negotiations Bulletin is also available at Linkages.

The outcome will be submitted for consideration by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD at its ninth meeting, to be held May 2008, where delegates will have to take critical decisions on the future of the ABS negotiations, in view of a 2010 deadline for completion.

Photo: Palais des nations, Geneva
(Photo credit: Earth Negotiations Bulletin)
Photo: Plenary session
(Photo credit: Earth Negotiations Bulletin)

Contact: Dr Brad Fraleigh

OECD Sponsorship Programme



OECD has a Co-operative Research Programme (CRP) entitled Biological Resource Management for Sustainable Agricultural Systems. At the Governing Body's annual meeting on December 14, 2007, in Paris, Michel Dodet, Vice-President, International, INRA, was officially elected President of the Governing Body, and Dr Martel, Vice-President.

The 2005-2009 sponsorship programme can be accessed on the Web at the Research Programme on Biological Resources in Agriculture website.

The Governing Body is composed of a representative from each participating country. It defines the general orientation of the programme. The CRP promotes two types of activities open to scientists: fellowships to conduct research projects from two to twenty-six weeks in a foreign country, as well as programme funding for sponsorship of workshops.

Photo: Governing Body Meeting
December 14, 2007
Paris, France

Photo: Governing Body Meeting
December 14, 2007
Paris, France

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Yvon Martel

Canadian Beans Become International

In the late 1980s, beans were seen as a potential opportunity for the future. This is why a new bean research program was started in Lethbridge with a young new breeder, Dr Gilles Saindon.

The original breeder was replaced but the program continued. An increasing percentage of beans grown in Canada are varieties developed by AAFC.

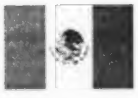
The production has now become international. Indeed, seed is being grown in Chile this winter and will be planted in the United States next summer to produce enough seed to plant up to 18,000 acres in southern Alberta next year.

In addition, seeds grown by these varieties are exported to more than 50 countries by Viterra's bean and special crops division in Bow Island, Alberta.

Who would have believed it back then that this culture would become international? Another success story that shows the benefit of research.

Photo: Dr Gilles Saindon

Contact: Dr Yvon Martel



AAFC and INIFAP - Mexico signs a Memorandum of Understanding

On January 18, 2008, Dr Yvon Martel, Chief Scientist, International, ISCB-AAFC, met with Dr Pedro Brajcich, Director General of the *Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales, Agrícolas y Pecuarias (INIFAP)* of the United Mexican States. The visit led to the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between AAFC and INIFAP. The objective of this MOU is to establish a framework of collaboration between both parties to promote joint activities in the sectors of agriculture, agri-food and technology. It is also meant to establish a framework to share the common interest of promoting research, training, technology transfer and the future development of the agriculture and food industry for both countries.

To reach the objective of this MOU, participants are committed to developing target cooperation actions that include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

1. Genetic improvement of beans;
2. Biotechnology research;
3. Pest control of plants;
4. Food technology and health;
5. Bioproduct research

The following cooperation initiatives will be carried out by both participants:

1. Exchange of research personnel;
2. Development of cooperative research projects;
3. Organization of joint scientific workshops. Other research cooperation discussed was related to plants such as corn, fruits and healthy food, biofuel for dairy production, forestry, and canola.

The initial focus will be the pursuit of collaborative research projects on dry beans, an area where there are industry benefits for both countries. Discussions have already been initiated with Pulse Canada to identify areas of collaborative research between Mexico and Canada.

Furthermore, during a meeting held on January 12, 2008, Minister Ritz and Secretary Cárdenas underlined the signature of the MOU between INIFAP and AAFC. Mexico is Canada's second largest source of agri-food imports after the United States. Canada imported about CAD $890 million in agri-food products from Mexico in 2006. That same year, Canada exported CAD $1.2 billion in agri-food products to Mexico, making Mexico Canada's fourth largest export destination for agri-food products.

Photo (l. to r.): Dr Yvon Martel, Chief Scientist, International, ISCB-AAFC, and Dr Pedro Brajcich, Director General of the *Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales, Agrícolas y Pecuarias (INIFAP)* of the United Mexican States.

Photo (l. to r.): Dr Salvador Fernández Rivera, Dr Jose Luis Romano, Lic. Ricardo Noverón Chávez, Dr Pedro Brajcich, Dr Yvon Martel, Ms. Nathalie Corbeil and Dr Francisco J. Ibarra Pérez

Contact: Dr Yvon Martel

Visit to PRC: Delegation of Chinese Potato Researchers

On 15-17 January 2008, a delegation of five Chinese scientists and officials visited the Potato Research Centre (PRC) in Fredericton and its Benton Ridge Potato Breeding Substation in Benton, New Brunswick. The members of the delegation were from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), the MOA Potato Seed Quality Inspection Center (MOA-PSQIC) in Zhangjiakou, Hebei Province, and the Chengde Weichang Potato Research Center (CWPRC), Hebei Province. The delegation held discussions with Dr Millette as well as other scientists on various topics, including research activities and potential collaboration projects in potato R&D, especially in potato breeding and seed potato systems. The delegation also visited several provincial and private facilities, including the Potato Development Centre of the New Brunswick Department of Agriculture and Aquiculture (NBDAA) in Wicklow, the Plant Propagation Centre of the NBDAA in Fredericton, and the Agricultural Certification Services of the New Brunswick Potatoes in Fredericton. They also toured a McCain's French Fries plant and Humpty Dumpty's Potato Chips plant.

Photo: Visit to the Benton Ridge Potato Breeding Substation of Potato Research Centre. Left to right: Dr Lien Chow (AAFC), Dr Jiang Yin (MOA-PSQIC), Dr Richard Tarn (AAFC), Dr Wanfu Pang (CSSA), Ms. Agnes Murphy (AAFC), Mr. Guangshu Liu (CSSA), Dr Zhenghua Zhang (MOA), Dr Xianzhou Nie (AAFC) and Mr. Mingya Ding (CWPRC)

Contact: Dr Jacques Millette

List of agreements managed by ISCB

As at February 1, 2008, ISCB was managing 46 scientific cooperation arrangements concerning 48 organizations from 18 countries. The arrangements were broken down as follows: 11 general arrangements (memorandums of understanding) with government agencies, 23 arrangements (EEA-AEA) with provincial or regional universities and institutions, five letters of intent and eight arrangements with a particular scope and/or with industries. The main countries were China (15), France (7), Brazil (3) and Spain (3). Almost 50% of arrangements concerned foreign universities. The Department also signed five arrangements with four countries on both trade and science. The Canadian government is currently managing agreements on science and technology with eight countries (China, India, the European Union, France, Japan, Germany, Israel and South Korea).

For ISCB, arrangements are intended to facilitate staff exchange, reception of foreign students, access to research funding, joint research projects and the exchange of expertise and information.

Contact: Dr Johanne Boisvert

Statistics on foreign research personnel in AAFC laboratories

Each year, AAFC scientists welcome research personnel from all five continents. Charles Kounkou analyzed the data from 2006 and 2007 provided through the invaluable help of the staff responsible for welcoming visiting personnel in each centre. Compared to 2006, the number of visitors increased by 39.4% in 2007, and the length of their stay increased by 1.7 months. In 2007, foreign researchers and students numbered 201, the length of their stays ranging from six weeks to two years.

Lethbridge, Guelph, Saint-Hyacinthe and Ottawa greeted the greatest number of visitors, who arrived on average between June and December.

In 2007, 28 countries sent visitors, 64% of whom came from China and France. Visitors from China formed the largest group with an equal number of researchers and students; they preferred Lethbridge, Guelph and Fredericton. France came second, with mostly student visitors who preferred Saint-Hyacinthe, Lethbridge and Agassiz. China and France were followed by Egypt, Spain, Iran and Brazil. The arrival of the first grant recipients of the MOE-AAFC program certainly influenced the data. In 2008, 40 new Chinese grant recipients joined the AAFC centres.

The ISCB wishes all of our visitors an enriching internship and hopes that they will take the opportunity during their stay to discover the scenic beauties of Canada. If you encounter any difficulty whatsoever, do not hesitate to contact us. It will be a pleasure to assist you.

Contact: He Shan

Project Twinning between Canada and the European Commission: a Promising Avenue

Held in Montreal on February 18th and19th, the Canada-European Union Workshop Biorefineries: Biofuels and Bioproducts was a collaborative effort aimed at identifying opportunities of common interest to AAFC's Agricultural Bioproducts Innovation Program (ABIP) and the European Commission's Food, Agriculture, Fisheries and Biotechnology theme featured in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) of the European Commission (EC).

The invitation to participate in this twinning initiative was addressed to nearly 30 Canadian and European representatives, selected on the basis of priorities of common interest to each program. The workshop provided a model exercise in the process of twinning activities as a mechanism for boosting EC-Canada Research co-operation. This type of pilot initiative, based on the principles of mutual recognition of each party's system for evaluating and coordinating calls for proposals, could also serve as a model for similar mechanisms on topics of shared interest between the EC and Canada.

As highlighted in the FP7-FAB WP 2008, collaboration on Canadian projects under AAFC's Agriculture Bioproducts Innovation Program (ABIP) will receive funding of up to 1% of the total EC contribution allocated to such projects. Canada will also contribute up to CAD $25,000 in parallel funding through the ABIP program for twinning with the European FP7-FAB projects

The main outcomes of the workshop were the following:

1. Thirteen projects "twinned" during a networking and planning session;
2. A Working Group (WG) established to co-ordinate and implement further collaborative initiatives and to maintain an ongoing dialogue between Canadian and European scientists;
3. A similar event next year in Europe led by the University of Pisa in Italy.

The participants feel that this workshop was critical for enhancing opportunities and paving the way for further beneficial interaction both in the short and longer term. The multiple links established between the European Union and Canada during this event proved to be the cornerstone of a deeper cooperation between the European and Canadian programs.

Photo: Representing AAFC and the EC, Dr Yvon Martel, Chief Scientist International and Dr Alfredo Aguilar- Romanillos, Head of Unit Research Directorate General, European Commission, thanking each other for the success of the Workshop

Group Photo: Canadian and European Union participants

Contact: Carole Morneau

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